

Your Parish's Website Presence

Introduction – Who are we?

The Vision

Your parish (or your diocese) doesn't need a technology strategy. Here's why.

"The internet comes along and it's mysterious and suddenly we need an email strategy and a social media strategy and a web strategy and a mobile strategy.

No, we don't.

It's still people. We still have one and only one thing that matters, and it's people. All of these media are conduits, they are tools that human beings use to waste time or communicate or calculate or engage or learn. Behind each of the tools is a person. Do you have a story to tell that person? An engagement or a benefit to offer them? Figure out the people part and the technology gets a whole lot simpler." - [Seth Godin](#)

The problem with a lot of organizations in the Church right now - who are even making an effort at embracing new communication technologies - is that they have the wrong strategy. We have to do a better job at connecting the use of powerful, new media tools with our mission as the Church.

The main reason so many in Church leadership balk at or don't understand the value of trying something new is that we too often focus them in on the wrong things. We act like the goal is to have a great web presence, or to have an active community on Facebook, or to build a huge email list, etc. Those aren't the goals. Those are necessary ways to get there these days. But those aren't the end goals themselves.

Our goals are things like — to bring more people to the sacraments (Jesus), minister to those in need, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, instruct the ignorant, comfort the sorrowful, work for justice and to pray for all. They are the same old goals we've had for thousands of years.

If you can show your church leadership how a particular technology helps you accomplish those things safely and more effectively? Then you'll have their interest. And eventually, you'll have their enthusiastic support, too.

Read more: <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/matthew-warner/your-parish-doesnt-need-a-technology-strategy/#ixzz1yOSMQBrx>

Generally used as a “communications hub” or “parent”

- Communications hub – all significant information generally resides on the website, with bits and pieces scattered throughout the web (e.g., via social media outlets). In this way people generally look to the website for “more information”
 - Parent – significant information resides on the website and is “Shared” or goes out from the website
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Information generally has a longer life on the website, this can be good or bad

- Longer life implies that information changes less frequently and therefore visitors have less need to frequent the website for new information. (Outdated info can be a turn-off and harm the site reputation)

- But at the same time the website can be viewed as a valuable reference point for more reliable information. If other sources leave you unsure, check the website.

Website in Branding

- Know your website address like you know your home address (important for accurately sharing its location)
- Include your web address on all marketing materials – brochures, flyers, BULLETINS, parish mailings, etc.
- Most websites don't require you to type www as a prefix (find out if it is required for your site).
- http:// not needed, is automatic when typing in a URL into the browser

Analytics

- Now you can track every move someone makes on a website, and this is generally not a bad thing.
- Find out what kind of traffic your site/page is drawing and from where, then you can think about making adjustments in content and placement to better direct traffic to certain parts of your site at different times of day. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES? (e.g., Google Analytics)

Use in Evangelization

- #1 – Include information about sacraments offered and when/how they can be received.
- If you want people to come to your parish or become Catholic, make sure they can find out how on your site or who to contact for that info. Keep your website updated with news about activities and events that are happening in your parish. This includes providing notice about events in advance and offering short follow-ups. Show the vibrancy of your parish life!
- Call-to-Action is important, don't leave people wondering how to get involved or learn more. Make sure that anyone who initiates contact via the website (through email, blog comments, etc.) is responded to promptly. It is a big let-down for people to feel as if they just sent something into a void.

- Use Scripture or Catechism references (and links to show context), you don't necessarily need to preach in your content, but a church website is the perfect place to bring faith into the dialogue.
 - Get the word out – if you update your site, let people know via other types of social media (email, facebook, twitter, etc.) and give a link to the updated content.
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Ministerial Boundaries regarding Youth and Adolescents

- Pertains to websites differently as compared to other social media because more website info is one way and generally doesn't solicit an immediate response.
 - But anything that does solicit a response from youth (i.e. retreats, trips, meetings, etc) should always require a parent/guardians attention in some way (i.e. permission forms, parental attendance, etc.)
 - Do not ask require youth to submit any personal info through website (phone number, email, etc.). Photos or names of minors should not be published without consent from parents/guardians.
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Involve Audience

Paths to website [*Find your website. What is the address?*]

- URL (direct)
 - Search Results (Google, Yahoo, Bing)
 - External links (other sites or media)
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Design (give a couple examples)

- Consistent with current Branding [What are your parish colors, logo?]
- What kind of look are you going for? Professional... [Mirroring the characteristics of you parish. Give one characteristic of your parish.]
- What will appeal to your audience?
- Color
- Typography- readability, consistency, avoid color, web fonts
- Photos - scaling, quality, size, respect rights,

- Graphics - avoid animated gifs
 - What are others doing?
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Copywriting

- Keep it interesting, professional (spell check, good grammar) and to the point
 - Think about context, you are writing for a website not twitter. This is not to say brief updates are not okay.
 - Variety is okay as well. Full length articles and brief updates or photo captions
 - Recruit help from people with writing experience
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Components/Enhancements

- Facebook
 - Blog
 - Podcasts
 - Video
 - **Bulletin Online - DPI / TheCatholicDirectory.com**
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Tools

- Site Builders - **CatholicWeb EZweb**, Weebly, Wordpress.com, Blogger, Tumblr, etc.
- Photo editing - Aviary.com (editing), Cropp.me (cropping)
- Content/Writing - meetcontent.com, gathercontent.com

Activity - <http://www.tinymce.com/tryit/full.php>